



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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Washington poultry and bird owners urged to protect flocks, report signs of disease

OLYMPIA — Following confirmation of Avian Influenza in a commercial poultry operation outside Abbotsford, British Columbia, the Washington State Department of Agriculture is urging poultry producers and bird owners to take precautionary measures to protect their flocks.

Dr. Kathy Connell, State Veterinarian, encourages owners to report signs of illness among birds, such as sneezing, coughing, nasal discharge, diarrhea, listlessness and sudden death. To report disease, owners can contact the State Veterinarian's office at 360-902-1878, the U.S. Department of Agriculture at 360-753-9430, or their private veterinarian.

Avian Influenza is a contagious virus affecting many species of domestic and wild birds. Although it may not be possible to determine the source of infection, the most likely source is migratory waterfowl, which are natural hosts for influenza viruses. Neither low pathogenic nor the more serious highly pathogenic Avian Influenza has been detected in any Washington state flocks. The Avian Influenza in B.C. and several states in the eastern U.S. is **not** the same strain as the Avian Influenza affecting several Asian countries. The low pathogenic Avian Influenza currently in B.C., New Jersey, Delaware and Pennsylvania does **not** pose a human health hazard. Even with the Canadian case of Avian Influenza, poultry meat and eggs are safe for human consumption.

Laboratory testing is needed to confirm Avian Influenza because signs of the disease can mimic other poultry and bird diseases. State or federal veterinarians can work with private veterinary practitioners, bird owners and poultry producers at no charge to collect samples for testing and diagnosis.

Washington state poultry producers and bird owners should review and strengthen biosecurity measures to ensure that all feasible precautions are taken to prevent the introduction of Avian Influenza (AI) and other bird diseases. Bird and poultry owners are urged to heed the following biosecurity practices:

- Don't keep pet birds on commercial poultry operations. Don't allow employees to maintain their own birds or poultry.
- Avoid visiting other poultry operations. If you must loan tools or equipment, ensure the items are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected prior to use again on your premises.
- Maintain good records on purchases and sales. If a disease problem arises, these documents can help animal health officials track and contain disease faster.
- Submit birds to a diagnostic laboratory whenever unusual disease occurs. For details on submitting sick, dying or dead birds, consult with Dr. A. Singh Dhillon, Director, WSU's Avian Health and Food Safety Laboratory in Puyallup at 253-445-4537.

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- Keep poultry houses locked and allow entry only to essential personnel. If dealers must enter your farm, insist that crates and trucks are clean and never allow dealers' crates to be placed in your houses.
- Animals should not be allowed access to poultry buildings. Work with a pest control professional to keep wild birds and rodents out of poultry houses.
- Do not attend auctions or sales where birds are sold. Do not bring birds from slaughter channels back onto your farm.
- Dispose of dead birds either by incineration, composting, rendering or burial. Never dispose of them in fields and do not allow them to pile up. Do not spread manure from any flock that has experienced illness and mortality within the previous three weeks, unless the manure is composted properly.

Another resource for biosecurity tips is the Web site for the University of California Davis School of Veterinary Medicine Cooperative Extension. Go to <http://www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/vetext/home.html> and select "Poultry Biosecurity Resource Forum".

More information on Avian Influenza is available from the Canadian Food Inspection Agency web site at www.inspection.gc.ca.

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